

FREE TRANSPORT SCHEME – BUS OWNERS – PAYMENTS (29/05/07)

(No. B/547) Mr P. Jhugroo (Third Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping whether, in regard to the free transport scheme, he is aware of the cases of some bus owners who have received payments from the National Transport Authority, although their buses were not in operation and, if so, will he, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Authority, information as to –

- (a) the number of cases, indicating the amount paid;
- (b) the action initiated for the recovery of these amounts, and
- (c) if Government proposes to review the mode of payment to avoid such malpractices in future

Reply: I am informed that two bus operators claimed compensation from the National Transport Authority (NTA) in respect of the free travel scheme when their buses were actually off the road. A total amount of Rs147,000 has thus been paid.

The NTA has already taken steps to recoup the full amount by withholding the compensation payable to those operators for subsequent months and is initiating disciplinary action against both operators, in accordance with the Road Traffic Act.

With regard to part (c), there already exists a number of control mechanisms which enable the NTA to detect malpractices and withhold compensation. However, a full audit of the present system is being carried out so as to identify shortcomings and reinforce these mechanisms. In case malpractices by bus operators continue, the mode of payment may be reviewed.